

SOC 696D: Dissertation Prep

Fall 2014
S SCI 415
M, W 3:30-4:45

Professor Jennifer Earl
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Office Hours: F 3-5pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The traditional goal of this course is to help you write and defend a dissertation proposal. As part of this, we will work on practical issues like committee structures and IRB certification and review. We will also work on bringing all of your methods and substantive training to bear to develop a meaningful and practical research question.

I also have a secondary agenda: you will learn and practice professional skills that will be critical for a successful academic career (and most other kinds of careers for that matter). Specifically, you will learn and practice a writing process that will help you accomplish research goals like writing a dissertation proposal within the context of the much wider array of roles you will develop as you age in your career. For some of you, this process will already feel normal and learning more about it will help you to correlate this process with your productivity, cementing these practices for you. For others, this process will feel very foreign and you will question the utility and importance of new practices and likely struggle to find ways to avoid these new practices. In the end, though, if you are willing to be open-minded and trust social science research on productivity and tenure, you will find your ability to work productively is greatly improved by practicing these processes.

REQUIRED READING:

There is only one required book, and it has been ordered from the bookstore, but you can likely find cheaper used copies online:

Boice, Robert. (1998). *Advice for New Faculty Members*. New York: Pearson.

There are also a few required articles and recommended readings. Required material is posted through d2l or available through stable links in the syllabus.

Recommended reading is the responsibility of the student to obtain. Several of the recommended readings come from the following book (Heidi has loaned her personal copy to the class in the Sociology library; please use it with care and thank her for sharing it):

David R. Krathwohl and Nick L. Smith (2005). *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal: Suggestions for Students in Education and the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Class meetings will be dedicated to discussion of the readings and peer discussion of/comments on assignments. Regular attendance, completion of the assigned readings on schedule, and participation in class discussions are essential.

Grades will be based on the following:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Grade per Assignment</u>	<u>Total</u>
In-class Participation		5%
Brief Daily Sessions	1% per/16 total assigned	16%
Questions for class	2% per/ 6 total assigned	12%
Assignments 1-15	3.5% per/ 15 total assigned	52.5%
Assignment 16		9.5%
<u>Recommended reading summary</u>		<u>5%</u>
		100%

Here are the details:

Participation: Students are expected to have completed all required readings before class. This will allow students to better participate in class. Class participation will be graded based both on frequency and quality. Students should not assume that they will automatically get these points—they must be earned through attendance and meaningful participation. In other words, assume you have earned 0 of these points at the beginning of the term and you accumulate points over the term if you participate frequently and through high quality contributions. An A for participation will score all 5 points, a B will score 4 points, a C will score 3 points, etc.

Brief Daily Session: A core skill you will have to practice throughout this term is the brief, daily session (BDS) in which you learn to work with consistent, but moderate, effort each day. As a way of learning to practice this, you will track effort towards completing all of your readings and assignments in a way that shows your brief daily work and you will be graded on the extent to which you adhere to this practice (in addition to being graded on their own merits in the case of assignments). I will describe in class how you will track your daily work through an excel sheet that you submit through d2l as a BDS assignment. It will track the date, number of minutes, tasks accomplished, and either pages read or words written during that session. Over time, this should not only let me keep track of the extent to which you are engaging in brief daily sessions, but should also let you correlate this practice with your productivity. Of course, in some senses, your tracking will be on an honor system because it is possible for you to falsify your records to some extent, but I encourage you to exercise integrity and turn in truthful accountings even if that is not to the benefit of your grades. Your excel file documenting your BDSs will be due each Monday morning at 9am and will cover the prior week (i.e., your first BDS log will be due on

Monday of Week 2 and you will have a BDS log due during finals week to cover Week 16 of class).

Questions for class: During the 6 course days in which questions are assigned, each student must post 2 questions about the topics for the week / assigned readings. Questions will be posted to the discussion forum on D2L by 6pm the day before we are marked to discuss the reading in class. Questions would ideally raise specific enough questions to be instructive. This is your chance to indicate what you want to discuss more in class, so it's best to not just think of them as quick to do items.

Recommended Reading Summary: One student will write a summary of the recommended readings for each week in which there are recommended readings and will post the summary through D2L to the forum on recommended readings. Summaries should help students who did not read the material to understand its content and, where necessary, comment critically on the work. The length should be based on what is required to provide a thorough summary—some weeks that might be 2-3 double spaced pages in 12pt font with 1" margins all around, while in others it may be longer. Summaries must be posted to the appropriate forum on D2L by 6pm the day before we are marked to discuss the reading in class. You will also present the summary in class.

Assignments: There are a set of structured assignments. Due dates and lengths are listed on the syllabus and/or the assignment itself.

COURSE POLICIES

- 1) The course will use D2L to track and submit some of your assignments as well as host class information. Students should be automatically enrolled in the course and are responsible for all material on this site.
- 2) **Late assignments will receive no credit.**
- 3) Students requiring any disability-related accommodations should speak with me in a timely manner to secure those accommodations.
- 4) Students are expected to abide by the student code of conduct and all University regulations.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topics and Readings
Week 1	8/25 & 8/27	<p>8/25 Introduction Discuss dissertation ideas as they stand now</p> <p>8/27 Assignment 1: Topic and Committee due Writing as a career Topics versus Questions</p> <p>Recommended Reading: Ch. 2: Choosing and Advisor and a Committee from Joan Bolker (1998). <i>Writing your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing your Doctoral Thesis</i>. New York: Owl Books.</p>
Week 2	9/1 (LABOR DAY) & 9/3	<p>9/1 No class for Labor Day.</p> <p>9/3 Fitting Your Research In: Getting Control over Your Teaching Commitments Discussion questions due for this reading: Boice: pp. 1-102</p> <p>Recommended Reading: Krathwohl and Smith, chp 1 (What is a proposal?) & 2 (The functions of a proposal)</p>
Week 3	9/8 & 9/10	<p>9/8 Assignment 2: From Topic to Question due Peer comments on Assignment 2</p> <p>9/10 Being a Consistent Writer and Writing Your Way to Answers Discussion questions due for this reading: Boice: pp. 103-150</p> <p>Recommended Reading: Krathwohl & Smith ch 4 (Description of the Problem)</p>
Week 4	9/15 & 9/17	<p>9/15 Assignment 3: Refining Your Question due Getting Unstuck as a Writer Discussion questions due for this reading: Boice: pp. 151-202</p> <p>9/17 Peer comments on Assignment 3</p>
Week 5	9/22 & 9/24	<p>9/22 Literature review basics: Purpose and Strategy Assignment 4: Literature Review, Part 1 due</p> <p>Recommended Reading: Ch. 5 of Kristin Luker (2008). <i>Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.</p> <p>9/24 continue discussion</p>

Week 6	9/29 & 10/1	<p>9/29 Assignment 5: Literature Review, Part 2 due Literature review, when is it “done”?</p> <p>Recommended Reading: Ch. 8 of Howard S. Becker (2007). <i>Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article</i> (2nd edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>10/1 Peer comments on Assignment 5</p>
Week 7	10/6 & 10/8	<p>10/6 Assignment 6: Literature Review Revisited due Check in on brief daily sessions</p> <p>Recommended Reading Krathwohl and Smith, chp 3 (The proposal as a chain of reasoning)</p> <p>10/8 Peer comments on Assignment 6</p>
Week 8	10/13 & 10/15	<p>10/13 Assignment 7: Overall Research Strategy due Peer comments on Assignment 7</p> <p>Recommended Reading Krathwohl and Smith, chp 5 (The methods section)</p> <p>10/15 Assignment 8: Human Subjects due</p>
Week 9	10/20 & 10/22	<p>10/20 Assignment 9: Case Selection due Peer comments on Assignment 9</p> <p>10/22 Mechanisms Discussion questions due for this reading: Gross, Neil (2009). A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms. <i>American Sociological Review</i> 74(3): 358-379 http://www.jstor.org/stable/27736068</p>
Week 10	10/27 & 10/29	<p>10/27 Assignment 10: Mechanisms due Peer comments on Assignment 10</p> <p>10/29 Assignment 11: Measurement due Peer comments on Assignment 11</p>
Week 11	11/3 & 11/5	<p>11/3 Assignment 12: Analytics due Peer comments on Assignment 12</p> <p>11/5 Discussion questions due for this reading: Murray Davis (1971). “That’s Interesting! Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology.” <i>Philosophy of the Social Sciences</i> 1(4): 309-344. http://pos.sagepub.com/content/1/2/309</p>

Week 12	11/10 & 11/12	11/10 Assignment 13: Contribution Peer comments on Assignment 13 11/12 Feasibility Discussion questions due for this reading: Krathwohl and Smith, chp 6 (Ensuring Feasibility and Other Proposal Parts)
Week 13	11/17 & 11/19	11/17 Assignment 14: Proposal Outline Peer comments on Assignment 14 11/19 Peer comments on Assignment 14
Week 14	11/24 & 11/26	11/24 No class—schedule private meetings with Jenn 11/26 No class for Thanksgiving Recess
Week 15	12/1 and 12/3	12/1 Assignment 15: First Draft due Peer comments on Assignment 15 12/3 Peer comments on Assignment 15
Week 16	12/8 & 12/10	12/8 Advice on actually working on your dissertation post-proposal 12/10 Assignment 16: Proposal due